



Marc Elrich
County Executive



Darren M. Popkin
Sheriff

Office of the Sheriff Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Thursday, May 14, 2020

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Via Microsoft Teams due to the COVID-19 Crisis

Minutes

Attendees: Debbie Feinstein, Chair (Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney); Tom Manion, Vice Chair (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff); Teresa Bennett (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services); Nicole Drew (Montgomery County Commission for Women); Laurie Duker (Court Watch Montgomery); Honorable Karen Ferretti (District Court for Montgomery County); Ingrid Gonzalez (Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – Parole and Probation); The Honorable Sidney Katz (Montgomery County Council); Lilah Katz (Student Member); Eshigo Okasili (Community Member); Amy Palumbo (Community Member);); The Honorable Karla Smith (Circuit Court for Montgomery County); Izola Shaw (Community Member); Mindy Thiel (Community Member); Ronald Whalen (Community Member); Smita Varia, Staff (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff);

Guests: Lisa Mandel Trupp (Office of Montgomery County Councilmember Sidney Katz); Cortney Fischer (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Violence); Assistant Chief Ron Smith, Captain Amy Daum and Lt. Gerald McFarland (Montgomery County Police Department); Shinyoung Park (Korean Community Service Center); Elaine Arndt (Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America);

Absent: Spencer Cantrell (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse); Tina Michaels (Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation – Pre-trial Services); Chief Marcus Jones (Montgomery County Department of Police); The Honorable Rebecca Smondrowski (Montgomery County Public School – Board of Education);

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Guidelines for the Virtual Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the meeting was conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. Debbie Feinstein reviewed guidelines for participants. She asked everyone to mute microphones when not speaking. Debbie Feinstein asked the participants to use the chat function if they would like to speak. She also requested that participants should identify themselves each time they speak.

III. Approval of March Minutes

The March 12, 2020 DVCC meeting minutes were reviewed. Tom Manion proposed a motion to approve the minutes without revision. The motion was seconded by Amy Palumbo and passed.

IV. Announcements

Elaine Arndt from Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America announced that National Gun Violence Awareness Day is June 5. During the weekend of June 6th, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America will be providing virtual events to uplift gun violence survivors and amplify the messages of their community partners on social media.

Judge Ferretti wanted to thank the staff at the Family Justice Center for sending out the daily Domestic Violence Docket with the list of cases. She said that it has been very helpful that attorneys are assigned to the temporary hearings because court advocates are not available for the virtual hearings. Amy Palumbo added that hearings are being set for 30-45 minutes so they can only do a few hearings a day. Before the COVID-19 health crisis, there was only one Domestic Violence Docket, however during the stay at home order, there are two separate dockets, one for protective orders and a second one for peace orders.

V. Committee Reports

A. Victim Services Committee update - Tom Manion, Chair

Tom Manion reported that the Family Justice Center (FJC) is still open with regular business hours. The FJC has implemented social distancing protocols to protect everyone. The staff are on a rotating telework schedule, and while they work from home, they are making outreach calls. While they are in the office, they wear masks and ask any member of the public COVID-19-related screening questions before they enter the center. The FJC has not seen a decline in the number of clients since the health crisis began. The FJC has also set up a dedicated email account for the public to use as another method of reaching out for help. The email address is safe@montgomerycountymd.gov and is monitored during regular business hours. Smita Varia created a handout addressing COVID-19 and domestic violence, and a companion video. All materials can be found at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc.

B. Education and Outreach Committee - Debbie Feinstein, Chair

Debbie Feinstein announced that members of the Education and Outreach Committee worked with other stakeholders on a Family Violence Prevention Campaign that was launched in April. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness about family violence (intimate partner violence, child abuse and elder abuse) and what services are available during the COVID-19 health crisis. An administrator with County Executive Elrich's office reached out to Debbie Feinstein and Smita Varia, and they convened a group to create the campaign. The campaign partners include the County Executive's Office, the Sheriff's Office, the State's Attorney's Office, the Montgomery County Police Department, the Commission for Women, and Health and Human Services.

Resource cards, stickers and posters (in English and Spanish) were created and are being distributed throughout the county at food distribution sites, grocery stores, restaurants, and wine and liquor stores. Court Watch Montgomery volunteers have been very helpful with calling vendors to ask them to distribute the materials. Smita Varia is also working on translating the materials into 14 other languages.

While the Family Justice Center has not seen a decline in clients, other partners (Child Welfare Services, Adult Protective Services, and the Crisis Center) have seen a decline since the stay-at-home order was implemented in March. Captain Daum reported domestic violence arrests and bonds have gone up in severity. Captain Daum reported that the Montgomery County Police Department has also seen a 30% increase in felony domestic violence incidents.

Debbie Feinstein also announced that the winners of the Choose Respect video contest were announced on social media on May 6th. The contest received 105 entries from 368 students from 28 schools and 5 organizations. The winners are:

- 1st Place – “I’m the Victim” from Northwood High School,
- 2nd Place – “He Loves Me from Roberto Clemente Middle School
- 3rd Place – “Our Memories” from Richard Montgomery High School (Rocket Studios),
- Honorable Mention – “Excuses” from Poolesville High School
- Honorable Mention – “Distraction” from Eastern Middle School

C. Legislative and Policy Planning Committee – *Spencer Cantrell, Chair*

Debbie Feinstein announced that the bill making strangulation a first-degree assault was passed and be in effect on October 1, 2020.

- HB 233 / SB0212 - Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Strangulation
This bill reclassifies strangulation as assault in the first degree. This nuance better recognizes the danger of strangulation, where studies have found that prior non-fatal strangulation is associated with a six-fold increase in the chances of attempted homicide and a seven-fold increase in the chances of completed homicide.

Debbie Feinstein also said that the Domestic Violence Supplement for the Police Department is being adapted to include more questions about strangulation.

Other bills of interest were also passed, but due to time limitations, Smita Varia has posted all of the bills on the DVCC website at

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/dvcc/legislative.html>.

D. Offender Program and Policy Committee – *Tina Michaels, Chair*

Teresa Bennett reported that due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the Abuser Intervention program has been temporarily suspended. In addition, a new contractor will be facilitating the program starting July 1st. All of the participants who were participating before the stay-at-home order will resume the program in July.

VI. Adjournment

Debbie Feinstein, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:05 pm.

The next DVCC meeting will be on July 9, 2020, 5pm-7pm at the Family Justice Center



Domestic Violence Coordinating Council